) promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which here in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

The Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin

Published by The Christian Rural Fellowship, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

ber 146 October, 1949

LIBRARY SCHOOL RELIGION

Highlights of Forty Years in Rural Life

By Paul V. Maris*

This is to be a forward-looking conference. It is to concern itself primarily with the role of rural communities in farm policy-making. But like Lot's life, although perchance for a nobler purpose and, we trust, with less disastrous results, we shall look backward for a moment before we become fully engrossed with the problems of the present and the future. There are sound reasons for doing this. One of them is that in charting a course it is prudent to take into account what has gone before. Another is that this is an anniversary occasion of much significance to the American Country Life Association.

At Berea, Kentucky, in July 1948 the Directors of the American Country Life Association proposed that inasmuch as the Theodore Roosevelt Country Life Commission made its report in 1909, thus focusing attention upon values in rural life with which A.C.L.A. has always been concerned, the fortieth anniversary of that event should be recognized in some appropriate manner at this meeting.

Fortunately, the report of the Roosevelt Country Life Commission provides a benchmark which we now need for measuring forty years of progress in rural life. In fact, it provides more than a benchmark. It provides a challenge. Paradoxical as it may seem, one need do little more than quote from its pages to keynote this conference. Consider for example our conference theme. The Commission's plea "that all the people may . . . have voice in the official affairs of the community" is in complete accord with the implications of -- "the place of the rural community in farm policy-making."

"Farmers do not influence legislation as they should . . . forces shall be encouraged and set in motion which will stimulate and direct local initiative and leadership. . . . The farm woman should have sufficient free time and strength so that she may serve the community by participating in its vital affairs." Are not all the foregoing statements of the Commission pertinent to this time and place?

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* Extracts from an address presented at the American Country Life Association meeting, Columbus, Ohio, September 7, 1949, by Paul V. Maris, Executive Secretary, A.C.L.A., and Consultant, Farmers Home Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Used with the kind permission of Mr. Maris and the A.C.L.A.

Quotations are from the Report of the Commission on Country Life. First printed 1911; reprinted 1911 and 1917; recently revised and published by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

RURAL YOUTH

In welcoming rural youth to this conference and enlisting their maximum participation in its deliberations, it would be difficult to choose more appropriate words than these from the Commission report: "We need young people of quality energy, capacity, aspiration and conviction, who will live in the open country as permanent residents on farms, or as teachers, or in other useful fields and who, while developing their own business or affairs to the greatest perfection, will still have unselfish interest in the welfare of their communities."

Much has been done in the past forty years to train and motivate farm boys and girls for the role which the Commission envisioned for them. Fourteen million of them have had the benefit of 4-H Club training and experience. The annual 4-H enrollment now exceeds 1,800,000. Around a third of a million boys are enrolled in high school classes in vocational agriculture and a million and a half city, town and country girls study home economics in vocational classes. There are youth departments in the American Farm Bureau Federation and in the National Grange. The Agricultural Extension Service places emphasis upon a program for older youth. A number of youth groups are banded together in Rural Youth in the U.S.A.

RURAL HOME

"Realizing that the success of country life depends in very large degree on woman's part, the Commission has made special effort to ascertain the condition of women on the farm. . . . Many farm homes in all parts of the country are provided with books and periodicals, musical instruments and all necessary amenities. There are good gardens and attractive premises and a sympathetic love of nature and farm life on the part of the entire family. On the other hand, the reverse of these conditions often obtains, sometimes because of pioneer conditions and more frequently because of lack of prosperity and of ideals. Conveniences for outdoor work are likely to have preference over those for household work. . . . The routine work of the women on the farm is to prepare three meals a day. This regularity of duty recurs regardless of season, weather, planting, harvesting, social demands, or any other factor. The only differences in different seasons are those of degree rather than of kind. It follows, therefore, that whatever the general hardships, such as poverty, isolation, lack of labor-saving devices, may exist on any given farm, the burden of these hardships falls more heavily on the farmer's wife than on the farmer himself." Much has happened in the intervening years to ameliorate a woman's work in the farm home, but her place is still important.

How about the houses in which farmers live? It is a sad reflection upon agriculture as an industry that the median value of all owner-occupied farm homes was $1,028 according to the 1940 census. The median value of owner-occupied homes for non-whites was $316. Forty-nine and one-tenth per cent, or almost half, of the owner-occupied farm homes were valued at less than $1,000; 47.6 per cent of tenant occupied farm homes were reported to have renting values of $4 per month or less. "For the country as a whole 2,478,346 units (farm homes) were reported to be in need of major repairs."

THE RURAL CHURCH

To quote from the Commission report again: "Any consideration of the problem of rural life that leaves out of account the function and the possibilities of the church, and of related institutions, would be grossly inadequate. . . . From the purely sociological point of view the church is fundamentally a necessary institution in country life. . . . The time has arrived when the church must take a larger leadership, both as an institution and through its pastors, in the social

reorganization of rural life. . . . The church has an indispensable function as a conservator of morals, but from a social point of view it must hold aloft the torch of personal and community idealism.

"The country church faces special difficulties. Ordinarily, the financial support is inadequate. Often there are too many churches in a given community. Sectarian ideas divide unduly and unfortunately. . . . Few of the churches in the open country are provided with resident pastors. Without a resident minister, church work is likely to be confined to services once a week."

"In rural villages there are generally several or a number of churches of different denominations, one or more of which are likely to be weak. Salaries range from $400 to $1,000."

"First, the rural church must be more completely than now a social center. This means not so much a place for holding social gatherings, although this is legitimate and desirable, but a place whence constantly emanates influences that go to build up the moral and spiritual tone of the whole community.

"Second, there must be a large extension of the work of the Young Men's Christian Association in the rural communities.

"Third, we must have a complete conception of the country pastorate. The country pastor must be a community leader. He must know the rural problem. He must have sympathy with rural ideals and aspirations. He must love the country. He must know country life, the difficulties that the farmer has to face in his business, some of the great scientific revelations made in behalf of agriculture, the great industrial forces at work for making or unmaking of the farmer, the fundamental social problems of the life of the open country. . . . Ministerial colleges and theological seminaries should unite with agricultural colleges in this preparation of the clergymen. There should be better financial support for the clergy."

There is a familiar ring to all that I have just quoted. Yet, it was the voice of 1909 speaking. Not the voice of 1949. One may appropriately ask, therefore, has there been progress? We look to the workshop on the rural church for the answer, but a few encouraging facts may be cited. Warren H. Wilson was almost a lone figure in his efforts to focus national attention upon the rural church problem thirty years ago when the American Country Life Association was getting underway. Now we have the Committee on Town and Country, sponsored jointly by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the Home Missions Council of North America, and the International Council of Religious Education. It issues a monthly publication entitled, "Town and Country Church." It holds an annual convention on the town and country church which is a vital force in arousing interest and stimulating action. It sponsors schools for rural ministers at land grant colleges. Many of the Protestant denominations now have employed rural officers. They are catalytic agents, stimulating action, disseminating information, and spearheading needed reform. The Catholic Rural Life Conference, founded some thirty years ago by Bishop O'Hara, has become a potent influence in this country, sponsoring a program of far-reaching influence and effect.

The Rural Life Association, a grass roots organization sponsored by the Society of Friends, Brethren, and Mennonites, has bridged the gap between American farmers and displaced persons of war-torn countries the world over in a great enterprise of applied Christianity and the brotherhood of man. Theological seminaries have developed well-staffed departments of rural church. Research has been conducted and informative reports have been issued. Salaries of rural pastors have been raised and standardized by some denominations. The Committee on Town and Country,

to which I have referred, is just now sponsoring one-day institutes on the church and the family farm. These are all symptoms of an awareness on the part of the churches of our time of the rural problem and of the churches' responsibility with respect to it. More encouraging still is the ever-growing number of trained, consecrated pastors of rural churches who are creating oases of Christian activity amidst deserts of barren and sterile community life.

RURAL EDUCATION

"There is a demand that education have relation to living, that the schools should express the daily life, and that in the rural district they should educate by means of agriculture and country life subjects. . . . The school must be fundamentally redirected until it becomes a new kind of institution. This will require that the teacher himself be a part of the community and not a migratory factor. . . . We find a general demand for federal encouragement in educational propaganda to be in some way cooperative with the states. The people realize that the incubus of ignorance and inertia is so heavy and so widespread as to constitute a national danger, and that it should be removed as rapidly as possible. . . . Every person on the land, old or young, in school or out of school, educated or illiterate, must have a chance to receive the information necessary for a successful business and for helpful, comfortable, resourceful life, both in home and neighborhood. . . . There is to be a well-developed plan of extension conducted by the agricultural colleges, by means of the printed page, face-to-face talks, and demonstration or object lessons designed to reach every farmer and his family, at or near their homes, with knowledge and stimulus in every department of country life."

What progress has been made in the field of agricultural education in forty years? The Smith-Lever Act has been passed resulting in the developing of the great agricultural extension system with which we are all familiar. The Smith-Jones Act has been passed giving us our great system of vocational agricultural teaching. Many common rural school districts have been consolidated. Consolidated high schools have been developed. School buses are a familiar sight upon our highways. They carry boys and girls to and from the consolidated grade schools. Some states are leading out by providing transportation for children to and from high schools. There is a trend in the direction of reaching a compromise between attaining optimum efficiency of administration through the process of school district consolidation and accessibility to pupils. Schools can be too far away from home for the welfare of the children.

The Commission laid stress upon the need for agricultural or country life surveys. "The time has now come," its report said, "when we should know in detail what our agricultural resources are. . . . We must now know what are the capabilities of every agricultural locality, for agriculture is the basis of our prosperity and farming is always a local business."

Surely the Commission would be gratified with the progress that has been made in the survey field. Fifteen hundred and eighty soil survey reports on as many counties or areas have been published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Detailed land capability surveys have been made on 1,500,000 farms and ranches including 304,261,000 acres. Reconnaissance land capability surveys suitable for community and other local planning have been made on another 300,000,000 acres in various localities throughout the country and are available locally. A generalized survey delineating areas of the country by degree of severity of soil erosion was printed and widely distributed in 1948. Major types of farming areas in the United States have been delineated and mapped. Departments of rural sociology have been added to most, if not all, land grant colleges, and surveys have been made which

reveal many facts of social and economic significance. Finally, with respect to federal aid to education, it may be said that such a bill is now pending before the Congress of the United States.

RURAL HEALTH

"Health conditions in many parts of the open country are in urgent need of bettering. . . . It is generally said that the rural population is less safeguarded by boards of health than is the urban population. The physicians are farther apart and are called in later in case of sickness and, in some districts, medical attendance is relatively more expensive. . . . There is great need for the teaching of the simplest and commonest laws of hygiene and sanitation in all the schools. . . . How and what to eat, the nature of disease, the importance of fresh air, the necessity of physical training even on the farm, the ineffectiveness or even the danger of nostrums, the physical evils of intemperance, all should be known in some useful degree to every boy and girl on leaving school. . . . We feel that the Federal Government should be given the right to send its health officers into the various states on request of those states at any time, for the purpose of investigating and controlling public health. It does not have this right except at quarantine stations, although it may attend to disease of domestic animals."

We now know a few facts with respect to health facilities in rural areas as compared with those in urban areas. They are not too encouraging. Nor were the statistics on the rejection of farm boys because of physical defects in World Wars I and II. "Just before the war the largely urban areas (mentioned above) which averaged 4.6 general hospital beds per 100,000 people had 166 physicians for every 100,000 people; the isolated areas with little more than .8 of a bed per 100,000 had only 74 physicians per 100,000. Another study showed that 100,000 more rural and isolated counties had only 59 physicians per 100,000 people. In 1943 there were 81 counties with no physician at all and 161 others with less than 20 per 100,000. Some entire states have only about one-third as many in proportion to their population as the more fortunate ones. The same holds true of dentists and nurses. Before the war there were about 1,400 people to every dentist in the city as compared with 4,200 in rural areas. Massachusetts had 403 nurses per 100,000 population, while Mississippi had only 62 per 100,000. *

But there are some encouraging elements in the rural health situation. The diets of rural people have been improved as a result of the dissemination of information on this subject. Health centers have been established, visiting nurses have been employed, and rural as well as urban areas are served. We now have the Blue Cross Plan in which many farm families are enrolled. Beginnings have been made in the development of cooperative health services which tend to bring such services within the reach of lower income groups.

RURAL RECREATION

"Country life," said the Commission, "must be made thoroughly attractive and satisfying as well as remunerative and able to hold the center of interest throughout one's lifetime. . . . Here and there the Commission has found rural neighborhoods where the farmers and their wives come together frequently and effectively for social intercourse, but these instances seem to be infrequent exceptions. There is a general lack of wholesome societies that are organized on a social basis." The Commission spoke "of the barrenness of farm life" and the fact that intemperance among farm laborers may be in part traceable to this cause.

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* "Why We Need More Hospitals," U.S. Public Health Service.

I have already quoted the statistics indicating that radio receiving sets carry the outside world to the poorest of our country homes (as of July 1947, 83% had radios). Three million, six hundred and thirty thousand farms or 62 per cent of the total reported automobiles in 1945. Twenty-two and two-tenth per cent reported motor trucks. Thus, it is evident that even many low income families have motor transportation, and there is perhaps no greater single remedy to the monotony of farm life than that provided by the family car. Many sharecroppers' children are enrolled in 4-H Clubs. We have made great progress along recreation lines. We cannot rest our case, however, by enumerating specific evidences of progress. Relatively, rural life must keep abreast in matters of recreation if rural communities are to retain their share of alert socially-minded young folks.

RURAL UTILITIES

"It may be reasonably expected," said the Commission, "that in the evolution of the transportation system the rivers will eventually carry a large part of the freight which does not require prompt delivery, while the railways will carry that which requires expeditious handling." But trucks have superseded largely the interurban lines in this field. The Commission said, "It is more important that small power be developed on the farms of the United States than that we harness Niagara." Since that time, however, we have harnessed the Tennessee River at Muscle Shoals and the Columbia at Grand Coulee and Bonneville. We have built the Hoover Dam. Now, as previously indicated, 61 per cent of our farms are serviced from central service stations. Farm power plants were mostly junked or retained for "stand by" purposes when central station power lines came within reach.

FARM ORGANIZATIONS

The Commission recorded its findings in this field under the heading, "necessity for working together." They found it to be "of the greatest consequence that the people of the open country should learn to work together, not only for the purpose of forwarding their economic interests and competing with other men who are organized but also to develop themselves and to establish an effective community spirit."

There is probably no area in which there has been greater development in the past forty years than in that of farm organizations. I spent six or seven years of my boyhood on cattle ranches in a western state. I recall not a single meeting of farmers in all that time. We sold nothing cooperatively, bought nothing cooperatively. Neither did our neighbors. There were fourth of July celebrations, firemen's tournaments, and similar events which brought country folks to town.

Contrast this with the experience of a typical farm family of the present time. The farmer and his wife are both likely to be active in the county Farm Bureau, the subordinate Grange, or the Farmers Union. The children are likely to be in 4-H Clubs or Future Farmer organizations. As a director of a small or large cooperative marketing or purchasing association, the farmer has learned principles of business administration. He has learned the significance of grades and brands. He has come to realize the meaning of membership relations and public relations. He has been cured of provincialism and isolation.

PRIVATE MERCHANDISING

The chain store system has come into being since the days of the Country Life Commission and expanded to every part of the country. What is the meaning of all this to a country community? What has happened and what is happening to private merchandising? I refer the question to our workshop on this subject.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The machinery of city, county, state and federal government has grown beyond all bounds that it was possible to anticipate forty years ago. The Commission did say, "We need such an attitude of government, both state and national, as will safeguard the separate and individual rights of the farmer in the interest of the public good. . . . It is natural that the organized consolidated interest should be strongly in mind in the making of legislation. We recommend that the welfare of the farmer and the country man be also kept in mind in the construction of laws."

Along with growth, there has been much centralization of power and authority in the Federal Government. Need for checks and balances are generally recognized. The Hoover Commission Report, issued during the present year, focused public attention upon all these matters. Our workshop on government agencies will do well indeed if during three sessions it can formulate a statement adequately delineating the problems that confront us in this area and proposing constructive solutions.

LABOR AND THE RURAL COMMUNITY

The Commission said, "So long as the United States continues to be a true democracy, it will have a serious labor problem. As a democracy we honor labor, and the higher the efficiency of labor, the greater the honor."

Since the Commission made that pronouncement, organized labor in America has grown vastly in numbers and influence. Great as has been the growth of various kinds of farm organizations, it is probable that farmers in general feel that labor has made even greater relative gains. Organized agriculture and organized labor view each other with mixed sentiments of respect and apprehension. It is well that they are to meet for a mutual exchange of views in a workshop which we have provided.

INTANGIBLE VALUES

"The underlying problem is to develop and maintain on our farms a civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals. . . . The proper correctives of the underlying structural deficiencies of the open country are knowledge, education, cooperative organizations, and personal leadership. . . . The work before us, therefore, is nothing more or less than the gradual rebuilding of a new agriculture and a new rural life . . . a rural organization that can supply as completely as the city the four great requirements of man -- health, education, occupation, society."

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN COUNTRY LIFE ASSOCIATION

This is the thirtieth anniversary of the American Country Life Association. Speaking at the third National Country Life Conference in Springfield, Mass., in 1920, Kenyon L. Butterfield, its president, said, "It is probably fair to say that the Roosevelt Country Life Commission was the beginning of the modern, the twentieth-century, organized country life movement. . . . The great underlying interest of the Commission was the human aspect of agriculture." And he concluded his address in these words, "There is work that cannot be done by the agricultural colleges or even by the great federal department of agriculture. We now have great farmers' organizations but they, too, have their limitations. There is a place for an endowed foundation, adequately financed, that can institute research, stimulate discussion, develop conferences, furnish public information and, in general, forward a great program of country life."

In the foregoing quotations Kenyon L. Butterfield has done two things. He has given his appraisal of the Country Life Commission's report to which his name

was subscribed and he has documented the relationship between the report of the Commission and the American Country Life Association to which its members have always pointed with a sense of pride. Theodore Roosevelt said, "I trust that so far as possible the work (of the Commission) will be continued by private and voluntary aid."

Although essentially unendowed, and with woefully inadequate financial resources, the American Country Life Association has carried on to this day. Its work is not done. The seven-man commission, which I have quoted so freely this morning, set a high pattern of objectivity and statesmanship. In my office are the printed proceedings of our past meetings. They reveal that many of America's great rural leaders have been active in our Association in years gone by. They have labored upon its committees and produced reports pointing the way to progress In keeping with our rich heritage and the noble traditions developed for us by tho who have gone before, let us labor for a better rural life in America, one in whic our gains in intrinsic worth may match our gains in intrinsic wealth; one in which the growth of the character of our people may keep pace with the multiplication of our material gadgets and paraphernalia; one in which our high pressure groups become equally high purpose groups; one in which our capacity to get to places in a hurry is equalled by our capacity to utilize our time advantageously once we get there.

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Printed in U.S.A.